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ABSTRACT

To provide preservice teachers with exposure to a diverse set of observation experiences, a three-year Iowa State University project will beam live television broadcasts from school classrooms to the university. The process will allow small groups and whole classes of preservice teachers to unobtrusively observe and discuss classroom events as they occur. Control of camera (pan, tilt, zoom) from the campus site will allow all aspects of the classroom experience to be seen. Cameras placed in selected classrooms will provide observation of a variety of teaching styles, classroom populations, and educational settings. The project observation model will be infused in an introductory sophomore level course and will focus on application of specific observation techniques (direct observation, time sampling, duration recording, etc.) presented in lectures, assigned readings, and microcomputer software programs. The telecasts will be used as a practicum or lab to apply observational learning. A project facilitator will be involved in both lectures and observation settings, bridging the theory of observation with application of specific techniques taught in the model by assisting preservice teachers in noting both teacher and student behaviors and explaining classroom occurrences. The final project objective is to create a consortium of teacher education institutions interested in receiving and telecasting classroom broadcasts via satellite uplink. (NEC)

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# Teacher On Television: New Opportunities for Rural Teacher Preparation

Prepared for

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## THE PROBLEM

As early as 1904, Dewey noted the value of preservice teachers seeing experienced colleagues working with children. Despite a paucity of conclusive research on the effectiveness of preservice experiences, teacher preparation programs are currently being compelled to provide students with additional varieties of clinical and classroom experiences prior to student teaching. A major challenge in the thrust to provide "field-based" experiences for preservice teachers is to provide an appropriate theoretical base to prepare students for applied experiences. Furthermore, when one considers the appropriations consumed by a fieldbased component, preservice teacher preparation should allow for maximum benefit from fieldbased opportunities. The expenses for an Iowa State University junior-level field experience are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Expenses - Field Based Component of ISU Block II

| | 1983-84 | 1984-85 | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bus Drivers | 485.00 | 835.00 | Number of students: approximately 150 |
| Block travel | 257.00 | 1,091.00 | Number of hours: 2 semester hours credit |
| Buses | 1,984.00 | 2,488.00 | 10 weeks duration, 6 hrs. weekly |
| Salaries (est.) | 7,500.00 | 7,500.00 | (60 hours) |
| | $10,226.00 | $11,914.00 | |

It seems critical, therefore, to supplement preservice teachers' expanding theoretical base with exposure to as many aspects of classroom teaching as possible before they assume part of the classroom teaching role. Traditionally, therefore, professional preparation has included placing prospective teachers in classrooms to observe. At most teacher preparation institutions, providing preservice teachers with adequate observation opportunities is complicated by 1) limited observation sites and restricted classroom populations available, 2) lack of systematic training of students in observation techniques, and 3) limited funds.

### Limited Sited/Restricted Classroom Population

Like other teacher preparation programs, the ISU program provides preservice teachers with observation opportunities within an area of proximity to the university. Therefore, depending on the location of the institution, students do not have exposure to a diverse set of observation experiences including urban, rural, and metropolitan.

Time and travel constraints limit the diversity of observation sites currently available to ISU preservice teachers. The local school population is not representa-

tive of the varied ethnic groups, minority groups and socioeconomic levels which graduates will encounter in future teaching situations.

Requests for increased preservice experience for our students taxes local schools that are already inundated with requests for field visitation and experiences. Transportation of preservice observers becomes costly and time-consuming as additional sites are needed.

## Lack of Early Systematic Training in Observation

The topic of observation techniques is usually introduced in an educational psychology course. At Iowa State University, this occurs in a junior-level Educational Psychology course, Ed Psych 333. There is a need for early systematic training which includes readily available, affordable opportunities for students to extend and refine observation techniques before requiring the students to be informed observers during their field experiences.

Since Horn pioneered a system for observing and coding classroom behavior (1914), many classroom analysis systems and observation instruments have been developed. Research findings suggest various teaching and child behaviors that result in effective instruction. Since preservice teachers will be evaluated during student teaching and in their future positions in the following areas: 1) productive teaching techniques, 2) organized classroom management, 3) positive interpersonal relations, and 4) professional responsibilities, they should be trained to recognize and evaluate these performance areas during observation.

No matter which observation instrument(s) and analysis system(s) are employed, the problem remains how to best offer preservice teachers opportunities to extend and refine observation techniques.

## Past Attempts: Direct Observation

Direct observation (sitting in classrooms) poses problems of disruption and scheduling. Under direct observation circumstances, there can never be freedom from the disruptions which an observer may cause. Furthermore, one can never be sure of the effect of the observer's presence on teacher and/or students' behavior. In an attempt to minimize disruptions, student observers have difficulties viewing certain details while sitting in the classrooms as well as being deprived of opportunity for spontaneous discussion of the classroom events as they unfold.

## Past Attempts: Indirect Observation

Indirect observation of classroom activities has been enhanced with the refinement of videotape technology. Classroom activities preserved for later analysis of teacher/learner behaviors are available within most teacher training programs. While few would argue the value of videotapes in teacher preparation, there are problems involved in videotaping in a naturalistic setting.

1) Crew and equipment can interfere with classroom activity, for a high quality, naturalistic product requires camera and mixing equipment for 2 operators.
2) Resulting video depends on the sensitivity of the crew to capture specific student activities and teacher activities.
3) Uncertainty of the use to which the videotapes would be put may discourage participation from desirable teachers and parental refusal for participation of certain children.

Videotaped teaching segments are used as part of the School Improvement Model (SIM) in training school administrators, school boards and teachers to evaluate teacher performance to help improve instruction. Developers of the evaluation system confirm the drawbacks of sole use of videotapes. The medium often imparts a staged, edited and, therefore, less-than-real connotation in addition to being costly to produce. As reported by SIM developers, fifteen-minute videotaped segments presently cost $9,000 to produce. Purchase of videotapes is likewise expensive and often of limited availability.

## National Need: Observation Preparation

It is important to note that the problems described are not unique to Iowa State University. A majority of personnel surveyed from top undergraduate education programs (rated by the Gourman Report 1983-84) indicated the need for more systematic, infused training of students' observation techniques focusing on pupil behaviors, teacher-pupil interactions or evolvement of lesson objectives. This is also the opinion of a majority of respondants to a survey distributed to teacher educators at the 1985 American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.

## Diverse Classroom

Just as there is growing national concern about the preparation of teachers interested in rural employment, institutions are questioned concerning the preparation of teachers to assume responsibility for education of exceptional children in the least restrictive environment. The spirit and intent of P.L. 94-142 requires

all educators to be familiar with the needs of handicapped learners, yet many educators have had limited opportunity to gain experience with handicapped students, lack the necessary skills to teach handicapped students, and exhibit attitudes that can hinder mainstreaming. All personnel surveyed from top undergraduate programs report severe limitations in providing preservice teachers with adequate exposure to teachers as they work with handicapped chidlren. Students in education are denied this experience unless they specialize in special education or unless they happen to be placed in a classoom with a mainstreamed population during their field experience or student teaching.

## Alternative Supplement to Direct and Indirect Observations for Preservice Teachers

It is crucial, therefore, to find efficient and economical methods for preservice teachers to observe real classrooms in diverse settings as teachers interact with children. Iowa State University is meeting this need by beaming live broadcasts (9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.) from school classrooms to the university.

The process of live broadcasts will eliminate the drawbacks posed by direct observation. A mounted classroom camera beaming live broadcasts to the university allows small groups and whole classes of preservice teachers to unobtrusively observe and discuss classroom events as they occur. Control of the camera (pan, tilt and zoom) from the campus site allows all aspects of the classroom to be seen. Participants can enter the campus observation classroom whenever their schedules permit, thus allowing observations at diverse times during a classroom day.

The broadcast approach provides a valuable supplement to indirect observation experiences. Although videotapes are used in aspects of teacher preparation, the live broadcasts provide a view of the "real" to balance student reactions to "staged" and edited videotape segments. Furthermore, live broadcasts allow preservice teachers the chance to view lesson continuity and development over days or to observe a specific child over time.

Cameras placed in selected classrooms at diverse settings will provide opportunities for preservice teachers to observe a variety of teaching styles, classroom populations and educational settings.

## THE PROJECT

The 3-year project, funded by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) will develop an observation module - "Observation: Key to Experiential Learning" which will be infused into an introductory sophomore level

course. A major thrust of this model is the application of the specific observation techniques (direct observation, time sampling, duration recording, etc.). The techniques of observation will be presented by the following methods: lectures, assigned readings (i.e., journal articles, textbooks, and monographs) and microcomputer software programs. The telecasts will be used by the preservice teachers as a practicum or lab to apply observation learnings. The project facilitator will be involved both in the course lecture and the observation settings. The project facilitator will bridge the theory of observation with the application of specific techniques taught in the model - "Observation: Key to Experiental Learning" by assisting preservice teachers in noting both teacher and student behaviors, and explaining classroom occurrences (i.e., grouping; reviews; student behaviors, etc.). Preservice teachers participating in the model will be scheduled into specific observation class periods in order to receive instruction by the project facilitator. Each broadcast day will have specified class periods (number of periods dependent on enrollment) reserved for direct instruction (described above) and the remaining class periods that day will be available to all students to utilize for observational experiences.

The final project objective is to create a consortium of teacher education institutions interested in receiving and telecasting classroom broadcasts via satelite uplink.

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